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## Proverbs 23:26, 1927

O.P. Kretzmann

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PROVERBS 23: 26.

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways".

Reunion Service

April 10, 1927

Peoria, Illinois

O.P. Kretzmann



PROVERBS 23: 26.

Not so many years ago I attended a divine service in one of our Lutheran Churches in the East of our country. It was Palm Sunday and a large number of children were being confirmed. The church was crowded to the doors as the pastor stepped before the altar to deliver his address to the children. But before he read his text, his eyes rested on the children whom he had instructed for the past months. And as he gazed upon them, tears filled his eyes and, with the amazed congregation looking on, he wept bitterly. The great audience sat quietly - all eyes were fixed on the weeping pastor before the altar. Finally, he recovered and delivered a powerful sermon on the very words which I have just read to you, "Give me, my son, thy heart and let thine eyes observe my ways". After the service he was asked why he, a man with so much experience, should have broken down before an audience. And he answered - and we could still hear the sorrow and woe, and deep bitterness in his voice, "For a whole year now I have had these children before me daily. I have known and loved them - I have placed before them Jesus their Savior. I know that today they love their Savior, they have given their hearts to Him, they have dedicated and consecrated their lives to Him. But as I stood before them this morning the thought came to me that a year from now would come another Palm Sunday and I would again stand before this altar and search the crowd for their familiar faces. And, oh God, some would be missing! And Palm Sundays would come and go and always the



number of these children would become less, not because of death, but because of life. And these thoughts overwhelmed me with sorrow and bitterness - and therefore I broke down".

And, my dear young friend, a moment's thought will convince you that that old pastor was justified in his sorrow. Palm Sunday, Confirmation Day, is always a solemn occasion. And so is a reunion service. If you doubt it, look about you in this church this evening. How many faces are missing? How many, who stood with you at the altar of God, are gone astray? How many who vowed faithfulness unto death, together with you, are gone from this church this evening? How many who renounced the devil and all his works before this very altar are tonight lost, lost to their Savior, lost for time, lost for eternity? Oh, my dear friend, a reunion service is always a solemn occasion. It brings home to us the fact that so many have gone astray - the terrible swiftness with which our days on earth rush by as a tale that is told. How short a time it seems since you first knelt before the altar of this church! And yet how much has happened to us in those few years. The waves of temptation to sin have swirled and eddied against us, the winds of doubt and unbelief have perhaps swept over us. The storms of sorrow and care which are life, have swept down upon our defenceless heads. In these few brief years how many sins have we not committed, how many times have we not broken our solemn promise to our Savior, how often have we not trampled the blood of our crucified



Redeemer under foot?

But, despite all this, our Savior has been good to us, who are here this evening. He has kept us in faith, He has held us with His Church, He has led us into His sanctuary this evening for the purpose of being reminded of the solemn promise which we once gave Him. And He, who was crucified also for those who are no longer with us, speaks to us who remain, in the words of our text, "Give me, my son, thy heart and let thine eyes observe my ways". In these words we can hear his sorrowing voice calling, calling down through the ages, calling particularly to the young people of the Church of the New Testament, with whom the danger of falling away is greatest, "O, my people, my sons and my daughters, turn ye, turn ye again, come ye to the God of your fathers, come ye to the fountains of living waters, come ye, give me your hearts and let your eyes observe my ways". Let us then hearken this evening to:

THE APPEAL OF THE SAVIOR TO US, THE YOUTH  
OF THE CHURCH.

I. GIVE ME THINE HEART.

II. LET THINE EYES OBSERVE MY WAYS!

I.

I have taken the words of our text for this evening out of their context. In the verses immediately preceding and following these words, our Lord speaks of the two terrible sins of unchastity and drunkenness. But it seems as though a consideration of these two sins, so often found in youth, leads Him to make the general appeal, "Give me, my son, thy heart". He would say that these sins, as well as all other sins, can be



avoided and crushed if the heart is given to Him who has given it life. And what does it mean to give your heart to your God and Savior?

Oh, my dear young friend, that means far more than we can hope to express in poor, weak, faltering human words! It means that we must give ourselves, our inmost being, our thoughts, our affections, our desires to Him; it means that our whole lives, all we do and say, must be hallowed by Him; it means that the Savior becomes no longer a mere name to us, vaguely to be worshipped on Sunday, but a living, vital, throbbing reality. It means that we must follow Him, love Him who hath loved us, with an everlasting love, live the living words of Him who wants our heart. "Give me, my son thy heart", means that God our Savior is not satisfied with mere belief of the intellect. You may give many thoughts to God, but those without the heart will not satisfy Him. You may offer Him external service, but He wants this only as a fruit of the loving heart. You may offer Him money and sacrifices, but if your heart is not in them, they are a hollow mockery, and will be rejected by God. Your heart, my dear young friend, your Savior wants - and your heart means you - you with your youth and life and health and strength, you with all the powers which God has given you, you with all the enthusiasm and zeal which are the eternal prerogative of youth.

And this appeal of the Savior to you, the youth of our Church, becomes far more strong and powerful when we consider the fact that He



has given His heart to you. Only a few more days and you will be standing again at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. There the blood of the thorn-crowned Savior, flowing in crimson streams across His face and down His shoulders, will call out to you: He gave His heart to you. There the blood of the eternal Son of God, dripping into the dust of Golgotha, will cry out to you: He gave His heart to you. There the Redeemer of a sinsick, sincurst and sinladen world, hanging between the earth which had rejected Him and the heaven which had forsaken Him - the Redeemer Himself will call out to you: I gave My heart to you - I gave My heart for you! And seeing that Cross and the sufferer on that Cross - how can we resist believing on Him and believing on Him, how can we but give our hearts to Him in unfeigned love and devotion?

Oh, if you will but look upon your thorn-crowned, crucified and dying Savior in faith, then you will be ready and willing, yea glad, to give your heart to Him. Come then, my dear young friend, come and renew your confirmation vow; come and give your Savior your heart! Do not give it to the world, to sin, to yourself - nay, come and place it at the wounded feet of the King of Men and Savior of the World; give your all to Him who hath given you everything; hear and follow his call: "Give me, my son, thy heart".

## II.

And if you will give Him your heart in faith, love and devotion, then you will also heed and follow his appeal, "Let thine eyes observe my ways".

Let your eyes observe the ways of God your Savior; that is the Scriptural way of saying that



you are to follow the ways of your God, travel along the path which He has pointed out to you, take that road to eternity, the course of which He has marked out by the words of His mouth. And that means that our whole life here on earth, our entire pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave should be governed, controlled and guided by Him, who has given us this life and permitted us to make this pilgrimage! And so we find that observing the ways of God our Savior is just simply the result of giving our heart to Him. Having given our heart to Him, we are now to have our whole lives guided and controlled by Him, who is the polestar of our journey through this vale of tears, by Him, who is Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life.

But we may say, why speak about our lives? We gave our hearts to our Savior when we stood before His altar, we have vowed allegiance to Him, we acknowledge Him as our Redeemer. That is good - but let us ask ourselves a question: Is our Savior still as close to us as He was on the day of our confirmation? Is He still the same living, vital, throbbing reality in our daily lives? How often, in the years which have flown by since the day we stood before this altar, have we not broken our solemn promise to Him? How often have we not turned away from Him, only to hear Him calling to us: "Oh, my child, my son and my daughter, what have I done unto you and wherein have I wearied you?"

My dear young friend, let us face the facts: At no time in the history of the world



has the danger of forgetting our promise to our Savior been greater than it is today. The fundamental characteristic of our day and age is a sensual materialism which matches decadent Rome at its worst. The universal insane, souldestroying chase after the almighty dollar, the waves of vice and lust publicly displayed, the prevalence of godlessness, vice and anti-Christian learning in the higher institutions of our land - all these point to the fact that a dying world is rushing to its doom, that a sinning humanity has turned away from God, and that the day of final judgment over the sins of the world is approaching with terrible swiftness.

And in all this storm and turmoil and confusion of the evening time of the world stand we, the youth of our Church and the voice of our Savior comes to us: Let thine eyes observe my ways! What does He mean? Ah, he means that you and I are to stand in a dying world as living monuments to the living words of Christ - it means that we are to give our lives to Him in faith and love and devotion - it means that we are to point a sinning humanity to His Cross as the only light, the only hope, the only salvation in a world of sin and woe, of darkness and gloom, of weariness and sorrow. O, my dear young friend, what will you answer? Will you turn away from Him in the future as you have in the past, will you again forget your solemn promise to Him, will you turn away from His cross and turn again to the sins and vices and souldestroying wickedness of a dying world? Or, will you follow Him, love Him, give Him your heart, give Him your life, make Him your



dwelling place for time and eternity? O, my dear young friend, your thorn-crowned, crucified and bleeding Savior asks you. What will you answer? O answer Him fearlessly, bravely, lovingly:

Take my life, my Lord, I pour

At thy feet its treasure store

Take myself, and I will be

Ever, only, all for Thee.

Are we saying too much? Are we demanding things of the youth of our Church which our Lord Himself does not demand? Ah no, look at the History of the Church and see what He has done just with the fire and devotion of young men and women who had given their hearts and their lives to Him! He seems to take a delight in making these His special standard-bearers in the day of battle. Look at Samuel! When all Israel became disgusted with the wickedness of the sons of Eli, the youth Samuel ministered before the Lord. Look at David! When he is but a shepherd boy he wakes the echoes of the lone hills with his psalms and the accompanying music of his harp. See Josiah! When Israel had revolted it was a youth, Josiah by name, that broke down the altars of Baal and burned the bones of his priests. Daniel was but a youth when he took his stand for purity and God. And so it is also today; this age may grow worse and worse, but the Lord is preparing for it by sounding the clarion call to consecration in the youth of our Church. The days are dark and ominous, and this eventide of the world may



darken down into a blacker night than has been known before; but God's cause is safe in God's hands. His work will not tarry for want of men. He buries His workmen but the work goes on. Our Savior will not fail nor be discouraged. Even now He sounds the trumpet call to the youth of our Church; even now, if you will but listen, you can hear this youthful army of God marching to the defense of the Church; from every land and every nation they come, they come; with the sound of jubilation, they come, they come; from East and West, from North and South, with an earnest consecration they come, they come. The youth of our Church, the Lord's reserves are coming up, and their drums beat victory.

And in this great army of God your Savior wants also you. And he wants you now. He wants your heart, He wants your life. Come then tonight and renew your confirmation vow, come then and give Him your heart, give Him your life. Consecrate yourselves anew to your Savior and His Church, heed and follow his call, "Give me, my son, thy heart and let thine eyes observe my ways". You will do that, you will come, you will consecrate yourself - and may <sup>the</sup> God bless you and keep you for time and eternity.

AMEN.